

“Sanctified with the Truth”

Rev. Erika Martinez-Flores
John 17.6-19
May 12, 2024.
Westby UMC & Viroqua UMC

Chapters fourteen through seventeen of John's gospel constitute what biblical scholars call “Jesus' farewell speech.” Of that block of four chapters, the last one is considered the longest prayer of Jesus recorded in any of the gospels; It is known as the farewell prayer or High Priestly prayer.

It is called that because in the words that Jesus pronounces in it he fulfills some of the duties of the High Priest according to Hebrew tradition: being pure in his conduct, ensuring the holiness and integrity of the other priests and offering sacrifices and prayers for all the people of God. In the last words of this prayer, Jesus asks the Father for two things: that his followers live in unity and that we live united to Him, to Jesus.

The verses from the Gospel of John that we read on this seventh Sunday of Easter tell us not only about Jesus' love for his disciples but also about his concern for them, which shows how aware he was of the dangers that lie in wait for those who loved him. They continue in all times and places, trying to walk in the footsteps of the Nazarene, living consistently under the banner of love without limits, peace without borders and universal justice.

What does Jesus ask the Father for his disciples? The first thing is to protect the unity between them, using the unity between him and the Father as a model. But how can we translate this concept of unity between Jesus and God into our current reality in such a contradictory society, which raises a war flag for any pretext? Unifying our criteria, uniting in the search for the common good, submitting our individual plans and ambitions to God's master plan for this world. Just look at our present.

Let us imagine that Christians who live in these nations, aware of the corruption, injustices and inequalities that exist, act and make decisions guided by the principles and values of the teachings of Jesus contained in the gospels. How this simple action

would affect many of our countries and, consequently, the present and future of our nations!

Jesus asks his Father to protect his disciples from the evil that lives in the world and not to take them out of the world. In this sense, the world is our destination place to exercise our existence and our Christian being, we have no choice. So identifying a cause worth living and dying for helps us cope with our soul's sense of being on this side of reality for as long as God sees fit to have us in it.

In the Priestly Prayer Jesus raises a plea to the Father which, at the same time, is a proposal for us; He asks her to sanctify his disciples with the truth. We can interpret that part of the prayer as an invitation to live in the truth. This truth that sets us free also equips us to live in the world, improving it, without letting the world define what our relationship with Jesus and with our brothers and sisters should be.

This, obviously, requires us to rethink what it means to be Christians in a world that constantly changes the values of things and even makes us doubt what is really true. That is why we should not be surprised that we are polarized to the point of having Christians defending the need to regularize the use of weapons to defend the right for children to be safe within their schools, and at the same time Christians defending their right to freedom. indiscriminate use and purchases of weapons; Christians advocating a ceasefire in the war between Israel and Hamas, and Christians condemning those who call for a ceasefire; Christians criminalizing immigrants who try to find safe harbors in other countries and Christians advocating to welcome them. Where is right? In truth.

That is the dialogue that Jesus invites us to have. Not a dialogue based on our relative truths but on the absolute truth that is God and that we find in the pages of truth revealed in the Holy Scriptures. There is the route to unity: "Father, may they be one, as you and I are one."